

**JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM**

AGENCY : NARA
RECORD NUMBER : 176-10036-10046
RECORD SERIES : National Security Files
AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

ORIGINATOR : Embassy Madrid
FROM : Madrid
TO : DOS
TITLE : Airgram
DATE : 7/22/1963
PAGES : 3
SUBJECTS :
DOCUMENT TYPE :
CLASSIFICATION :
RESTRICTIONS :
CURRENT STATUS :
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 9/10/2000
OPENING CRITERIA :
COMMENTS : National Security Files, Box 44: Cuba Cables, 7/16/63-7/31/63. Box 1

AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3-year intervals.
Declassified 12 years after
date of origin

RM/AN
ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION
BRANCH

DATE: July 22, 1963

TO : Department of State

INFO : VIENNA

FROM : Amembassy MAIRID

SUBJECT : Cuban Cultural Counselor in Vienna Defects to Spain

REF ①

Aldo MENENDEZ Paret, Cultural Counselor of the Cuban Legation in Vienna, who defected to Spain, visited the Embassy July 17 and was received by Mr. E. J. WILLIAMSON and the reporting officer. Through the Embassy had already received a report on a Spanish police interrogation of Menendez, held a few days earlier.

Menendez related that he had held his job in Vienna since November 1961 and that he had left on account of ideological incompatibility with the Castro regime. He gave as the reason for his late defection, the fact that he was trying to convince his wife to accompany him; she refused and, as far as he knows, is still in Vienna and will return to Cuba.

According to Menendez, there remain three officers in the Cuban Legation in Vienna, all of them thoroughly convinced communists. Charge d'Affaires Amado PALENQUE, a Communist theorist, was sent from Havana to replace Fernando GAINZA, who also defected to Spain (See Airgram A-520). Mrs. Palenque is also accredited to the Austrian Government, and has the title of Third Secretary. The third officer is Roberto BEHAR, First Secretary of Legation, a forceful man of little education. Menendez considers Mrs. Palenque very clever and thinks she really runs the office. Described as security-conscious, Mrs. Palenque has the keys to the safe, handles all classified correspondence, and is not above listening in on telephone conversations made through the Legation switchboard. She is in charge of the two-key safe.

The only other Cuban Government employee residing in Vienna is Luis Orlando RODRIGUEZ, Cuban Ambassador to the Atomic Energy Commission. Menendez, interestingly enough, described Rodriguez in terms similar to

FORM
4-62 DS-323

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Drafted by:

GWL:deu:ep

7-19-63

Contents and Classification Approved by:

Clearances:

DECLASSIFIED

By *WJW* NARS, Date 9/19/80

MUNDY-SMITH
IELR
CHASE
DINGEMAN
DUNGAN
FELDMAN
FORRESTAL
HIRSCH
JOHNSON
KAYSEN
KILDUFF
KLEIN
KOMER
PARROTT
SAUNDERS
SCHLESINGER
SMITH
WIESNER

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those used by GAINZA during his interview with Embassy officers. Both of them thought that Rodriguez was a decent fellow and an anti-communist. However, he was in ill health and had a wife and a number of children, which made it difficult for him to break with the Castro regime. Menendez expressed the opinion that Rodriguez was saving some money to be prepared for the day when he receives orders to return to Havana, at which time he would most likely disregard his instruction and remain outside of Cuba. His wife is outspokenly anti-communistic.

Menendez described the Legation as not being exactly a hotbed of activity. Chores are minor and involve mainly contact with other bloc diplomatic representatives and increasingly closer contact with the Austrian Communist Party. While under Gainza's regime locals were hired by the Legation, now they are taken on only upon recommendation by the Austrian CP.

KOPLINIG, FISCHER and other Austrian Communist leaders were frequent visitors to the Cuban Legation, Menendez said, as was an Austrian newspaperman by the name of Bruno FREY, who had lived some time in Mexico. Menendez believed that Frey was on the Cuban payroll, furnishing political information on the Austrian scene. Frey's daughter, Elizabeth, was employed by the Legation as a receptionist. Formerly, the Legation employed a Peruvian by the name of Dr. José CALDERÓN as translator. Calderón, however, staunchly anti-communistic and a good Catholic, was fired. He was replaced by a lady with the first name of DORA, recommended by the Austrian CP. Another Austrian woman, whose name Menendez did not recall, assists her part time. The Palenques live in the same building in which the Legation is located, on Wiedner Hauptstrasse No. 47, but on a different floor. Behar lives nearby.

Menendez described his own work as insignificant, and said he was mainly concerned with the monthly mailing of 2000 copies of a cultural magazine, which was edited in Havana but translated into German by the Legation. Additional copies were given out by the Legation to visitors. Moreover, he attended cultural functions and lectured in Austrian institutes of higher learning on Cuba. He also assisted in the recent drive of the Cuban Government for the hiring of foreign technicians and interviewed Austrian technicians interested in working in Cuba. He set the number of those interviewed at six. Menendez claimed not to have had access to classified information and said that Mrs. Palenque, who controlled the safe was so careful, that he was not able to take any papers out when he defected. He claimed to have had no knowledge of the intelligence and communications work effected by the Legation, although he said he was sure that they had no radio equipment. Pouches were delivered weekly to the Czech Embassy in Vienna for transmittal to Prague and onward to Havana. A Cuban diplomatic courier came once a month on a swing through the European capitals.

There was only one Cuban student in Austria. He was David GARCIA Santamaria, studying in Graz. In Menendez' opinion, Garcia was disillusioned with Castro and would probably not return to Cuba.

A visitor frequently seen in the Legation was DOMINGUEZ (fnu), a Spanish exile, who was active in the World Peace Organization. Menendez recalled also that during the last few months, he had seen three Americans at the Legation. One was a

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student, whom he characterized as a beatnik type who came with a girl, who probably was also an American, inquiring about the possibility of obtaining a visa for Cuba. The second man, whose name he believed to have been Robert GOOD, came five or six times in June. He was also interested in going to Cuba. He thought that Mr. Good was about 30 years old. Finally, about eight months ago a Mr. PORTER called at the Legation. Mr. Porter, who returned to the Legation in June, claimed to be an ex-serviceman; to have been in the US Army and to have participated in the Normandy landings. Porter described himself as a student of history and sociology at the University of Vienna and asked for magazines and books about present day Cuba.

Menendez was reluctant to tell anything about his training for his job, and claimed to have been instructed briefly in the Foreign Office by RUIZ DE VELASCO on cultural affairs. He alleged that he received his position through a passing acquaintance with Cuba's present Ambassador to Bolivia Roberto AJA, whom he befriended during the Batista regime.

Comment: From Menendez' story and the Spanish police report it appears that his motivation for defection was only in part-if at all-connected with his ideological opposition to Castro. At the Legation, working as a receptionist-typist was a Spanish girl, Matilde HERRERA, and it seems that Menendez got emotionally involved with her, and when he received orders to return, he abandoned his wife and son and followed her to Spain, where she had gone a few days before him. It would appear that Menendez had a more active part in the operation of the Legation than he admits, and at least in the times of Gainza had access to classified material. This he plays down, because his stay in Spain depends on his ability to convince the Spanish authorities that he had never been a Communist and that he is only a small fish. Additional debriefing on some intelligence points will be conducted through CAS channels.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

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